



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

News Release

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TWO EUROPEAN MEN SENTENCED FOR TRAVELING TO TUCSON TO HAVE SEX WITH UNDERAGE GIRLS IN MEXICO

TUCSON – Two men from Europe have received prison sentences of more than four years each for traveling to Tucson to have what they believed would be pre-arranged sex with underage girls in Mexico. The child sex tourism charges against both men were the result of an undercover investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Manfred Knittel, 53, of Sigmaringen, Germany, and Sebastien Sarraute, 31, of Antony, France, were each sentenced this week to 51 months in prison, followed by lifetime supervision. The sentences come after both men pleaded guilty to charges that they traveled to Tucson with the intent to engage in illicit sexual conduct.

“These cases clearly show there are pedophiles who mistakenly believe if they prey on children beyond our borders that they are outside the reach of the law,” said Roberto Medina, special agent-in-charge of the ICE office of investigations in Arizona. “ICE is committed to doing everything possible to bring these predators to justice and to prevent the sexual exploitation of children both here and abroad.”

“These men were poised to commit despicable and unconscionable acts,” said Paul K. Charlton, U.S. Attorney for the District of Arizona. “We will use all the resources at our disposal to identify, investigate and prosecute those individuals who attempt to prey on innocent children.”

Between August 2003 and late September 2004, Sarraute communicated with undercover ICE agents whom he believed to be purveyors of children for sexual activities. He paid a deposit to secure his reservation to travel to Tucson, and eventually to Mexico, to participate in sexual activity with girls from 10 to 14 years of age, preferably two at a time. Sarraute agreed to pay \$900 for the opportunity to have sex with children over a one-week period. He arrived at Tucson International Airport September 22 of last year and was arrested by ICE agents.

In his communications with undercover ICE agents from July through October of last year, Knittel expressed his preference for the age, type of sexual activity, price, and the dates of travel. Ultimately, he agreed to pay \$875 and sent a deposit to ensure he would have a pool of pre-teen girls from which to choose. The defendant then traveled from Germany, arriving at Tucson International Airport October 31, 2004. Knittel was arrested shortly after landing. A search of his effects turned up the remainder of the deposit in U.S. currency, three condoms, packets of male performance enhancement drugs, a stuffed animal, and candy.

Knittel, who pleaded guilty to a one-count indictment in March, was sentenced August 29 by U.S. District Judge Cindy K. Jorgenson. Sarraute was sentenced yesterday by U.S. District Court Judge Raner C. Collins. He pleaded guilty to a one-count indictment June 16, 2005. Both men will be turned over to ICE for deportation after serving their sentences. Neither will be allowed to return to the United States.

Knittel and Sarraute's arrests are part of Operation Predator, an ongoing ICE enforcement initiative to identify, investigate, arrest and, in the case of foreign nationals, deport child sex predators. Since the initiative began in July 2003, ICE agents have arrested more than 6,200 individuals nationwide, including more than 200 in Arizona.

ICE encourages the reporting of suspected child predators and any suspicious activity through its toll-free hotline at 1-866-DHS-2ICE. This hotline is staffed around the clock by investigators. Suspected child sexual exploitation or missing children may be reported to the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, an Operation Predator partner, at 1-800-843-5678 or <http://www.cybertipline.com>.

#ICE#

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.